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Historical Magazine of the Protestant Episcopal Church, Vol 34 1965

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GOLD AND THE GOLD RUSH

IN THE 1840's gold was discovered in California and a decade or so later on the Fraser and Thompson rivers. In the 1860's it was found in the Cariboo and in 1896 in the Klondike.

With each new discovery there was a mad rush of people from every walk of life and from a wide variety of ethnic origins. The Klondike gold rush was different from the others because of the peculiar and profound hardships to be faced in getting to the gold fields and in staying alive once there. In a very real sense it was the last frontier.

The discovery of gold in the Yukon is credited to Archdeacon Robert McDonald, a pioneer Anglican missionary. Soon after his arrival at Fort Yukon in 1862 he "saw so much gold that he could have gathered it with a spoon."[1] No one was greatly interested, least of all the missionary, and the matter was almost forgotten.

Two years later, in 1864, Robert Campbell, a clerk of the Hudson's Bay Company, wrote home from Fort Yukon,

> I had some thoughts of digging the gold here but am not sure about it. I do not think it is in paying quantities near the fort, but if only I get time to make an expedition up the Yukon I expect we should find it in abundance, but I am always on the voyage or busy at the fort during the summer, and in winter nothing can be done in the way of gold-hunting.[2]

The first gold known to have come from any part of the Yukon basin to the outside world was sent to St. Michael in 1880 by George Holt, an employee of the Alaska Commercial Company. He had been prospecting for the past two years. During the next few years

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[1]William Ogilvie, *Early Days on the Yukon,* London. John Lane, The Bodley Head, 1913, p. 86.

[2]*Ibid.*

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a number of discoveries were made along the Yukon valley but none were large enough to attract widespread attention.

During this same period a number of trading posts were established along the river. Following the occupation of Alaska by the U.S.A. numbers of American traders made their way up and down the Yukon river. They were quite heedless of international boundaries and set up their posts wherever they saw a chance of doing business. Their names are perpetuated along the river, Harper, Stewart, McQuesten, Mayo. Among these posts was Fort Cudahy, named after Michael Cudahy, president of the North American Trading and Transportation Company. Situated on the north side of the Fortymile river, at its confluence with the Yukon, Fort Cudahy quickly became a meeting place for miners. In 1895, a detachment of the North West Mounted Police was established by Inspector Charles Constantine between Fort Cudahy and the older Fortymile settlement.

In August, 1896, came the discoveries which led to the great gold rush of the following year. It was only a matter of time before the news of the rich discovery reached the outside world. In the following July, the steamer *Excelsior* sailed into San Francisco and the *Portland* reached Seattle carrying between them gold dust and nuggets to the value of a million and a half dollars or more, and weighing over a ton. Within a few weeks the gold rush had begun.

The next few years witnessed a very large influx of population although it was perhaps not as large as popular writers have made it appear. Anything it lacked in size, however, was amply offset by the diverse backgrounds from which the prospectors came. Table 1 (drawn like subsequent tables from dominion census figures) lists the numbers of those who immigrated to Yukon from outside Canada in the latter part of the nineteenth century. Statistics for the twentieth century do not appear.

TABLE 1

1866-1870	66
1871-1875	91
1876-1880	143
1881-1885	310
1886-1890	592
1891-1895	814
1896-1900	8668

This, of course, is not the complete figure because it does not include those who came from other parts of Canada.

It is not surprising to note that most of those who came were men, many of them unattached.

TABLE 2

	Men	*Women*
Single	18,281	1,730
Married	4,501	2,190
Widowed	277	204
Divorced	25	11
TOTAL (1901)	23,084	4,135

A breakdown of population by racial origin does not appear in the census returns until 1911 from which the statistics in Table 3 are taken. It may be noted that by 1901 the population of Dawson had risen to 27,219 of whom 6,721 were citizens of the U.S.A. In 1911 the population had declined to 8,512 while by 1921 it was only 4,157.

TABLE 3

Population of Yukon by Racial Origin

English	1200
Irish	649
Scottish	1032
Other British	48
French (x)	482
German	412
Austro-Hungarian	105
Belgian	18
Bulgarian & Rumanian	13
Chinese	—
Dutch	14
Greek	18
Hindu	1
Indian	1152
Italian	61
Japanese	74
Jewish	41
Negro	31
Polish	34
Russian	105
Scandinavian	672
Swiss	21
Unspecified	1992

(x) All but six of the French appear to have been born in Quebec.

It should be borne in mind that racial origin is not the same as citizenship. With the exception of the large U.S.A. contingent and perhaps the smaller Russian group it is probable that most of the Klondikers had been resident in the dominion for periods of

varying length and had not been drawn to Canada for the first time by the gold rush.

EARLY MISSIONARIES

Apart from the earlier work of Archdeacon McDonald among the Indians in the vicinity of Fort Yukon, 1862-1867, Anglican missions may be said to have begun in 1891 when William Carpenter Bompas, Bishop of Mackenzie River, was translated if the usual term can be used in such unusual circumstances to the new see of Selkirk. Its name was changed to Yukon in 1907.

Sad to say, Bompas was not the resourceful, appealing and convincing successor of the Apostles needed for such a mission.[3] On his own admission he felt unable to minister to the miners and, from the accounts of others, he made it difficult for his clergy to do so.

On the lighter side there is an amusing tale of one of the bishop's encounters with the white population. One evening in 1895, a miner and a woman who appeared to be his fiancee appeared at the bishop's house at Fortymile wishing to be married. Scarcely was the ceremony completed when there was a knock at the door. Answering it, the bishop found himself confronted by another man who demanded to be taken to the bridegroom immediately. Bompas, a little taken aback by the abruptness of the approach, replied that the groom was busy and could not for the moment be disturbed. The visitor then identified himself as an officer of the Mounted Police and explained that it was urgent that he should see the man at once. Now somewhat uneasy the bishop led the way into his study where the policeman explained that the bride, who also seemed a little apprehensive, already had another husband and that, in fact, he was waiting outside. "In that case," said the bishop, "the ceremony I have just performed is null and void, but" he added, his eyes twinkling with humour, "I have the fees."[4]

Although Bompas did not feel able to work among the miners himself he made some attempt to secure others to do so. The first of these was Richard John Bowen,[5] a young Englishman, trained

[3]There is no adequate biography of Bompas. The only one available is a eulogistic study, *An Apostle of the North*, by H. A. Cody, London: Seeley & Co., 1908.

[4]H. M. E. Hayne & H. W. Taylor, *The pioneers of the Klondyke*, London: Sampson Low, Marston & Co., 1897, p. 86.

[5]Richard John Bowen, Church Missionary College, 1894. Deacon, 1897; Priest, 1898 by Bishop Bompas, 1897-1899, Dawson: 1900-1903, Whitehorse; 1903, returned to England.

at the Church Missionary College, Islington, who arrived at Fortymile on August 4th, 1895. It must be admitted that Bompas had recruited him to work among the Indians but when the gold rush occurred he changed his mind and thought to use him among the miners. This raised a difficulty about the funds to be used for Bowen's stipend. The Church Missionary Society (C.M.S.) accepted no responsibility for white work and, therefore, its funds could not now be used to pay Bowen. However, the bishop had another and equal grant from the Colonial and Continental Church Society (C. & C. C. S.) so the difficulty was solved.

Before winter came, however, Bompas had changed his mind again and Bowen spent the next few months at Circle City which he described as "a muddy and boggy place." Circle City was in Alaska but as the work there had been established by English missionaries Bompas seemed to have some feeling that it should be continued by them.

Bowen returned to Fortymile in the spring of 1897. He was made deacon on Trinity Sunday and appointed to Dawson. On January 13th, 1898, he married Susan K. Mellett, a young Irish school teacher who had come to the diocese in 1893.

DAWSON AT THE TURN OF THE CENTURY

The end of the journey for the would-be prospectors was a new community on the flats at the confluence of the Yukon and Klondike rivers. It received its name in honour of George M. Dawson, director of the Canadian Geological Survey, a doubtful compliment.

> Dawson was far from attractive in any way, and most unhealthy. It was built on a frozen swamp which had been navigable the previous spring owing to a flood which submerged the place for some weeks, the people going about from one spot to another in canoes. It had partially dried up, but its last state was worse than the first. Sixteen thousand persons had been encamped on the ground there before moving up the creeks to prospect; there had been no attempt at sanitation or organization.[6]

It is difficult, at this moment, to comment on class structures and public morality in the early days of Dawson. There is, I think, evidence for the maintenance of some form of justice by the miners' meeting in the early days of Fortymile but it is unlikely that this was continued after the establishment of the Mounted Police de-

[6]S. B. Steele, *Forty Years in Canada*, Toronto: McClelland, Goodchild & Stewart, 1918, p. 321.

tachment. Dawson was, in some sense, an "instant" town, set up to meet the needs of administrators and their families.

The presence of the Mounted Police from the earliest days of Dawson made for a degree of law and order with the result that Yukon was free of much of the crime and violence that plagued Alaska. Even at that, however, sharp practice and immorality were by no means absent.

The official handbook of the Yukon Territory, published by the Ministry of the Interior, 1907, describes Dawson at that time. It is probably worthwhile to quote it at length.

> Situated at the confluence of the Klondike and the Yukon rivers, and at a point accessible to navigation, is the townsite of Dawson, which quickly became the centre of business and the distributing point to the different creeks. The townside was laid out in blocks, cabins were rapidly built, streets were graded and improved, stores, hotels, hospitals and churches were built, a water system, electric light plant and telephones were installed, business men started in opposition to the companies which had been trading in the district, and by 1900 Dawson had become a typical up-to-date western town.
>
> The city of Dawson was incorporated in 1902, and governed by a mayor and municipal council until the fall of 1904, when by petition and upon the verdict of a plebiscite, the charter was rescinded, and the affairs of the city are now administered by the commissioner.
>
> By 1900 the accomodation afforded by the different government offices was found to be absolutely inadequate for the proper transaction of the increasing volume of business. During the summer of this year the post office building was erected at a cost of about $51,000, providing accomodation for a post office, customs, registrar's office and telegraph office. In the same year a court house was erected at a cost of about $50,000, and an administration building at a cost complete in the neighbourhood of $100,000. The administration building provides accomodation for the transaction of business connected with the different branches of the Department of the Interior and territorial government [the Yukon Territory had been constituted in 1898], and a council chamber in which the sessions of the legislative council are held. In 1902, school buildings were erected at a cost of about $40,000.
>
> In 1903-1904 the Carnegie library was built at a cost of over $25,000, which amount was donated by Mr. Andrew Carnegie. There is also a large skating and cur'ing rink, with club room and gymnasium, which were built at a cost of about $40,000.
>
> During the summer of 1900 Lord Minto, who was at that time Governor General of Canada, and Lady Minto, visited

> Dawson, and were accorded an enthusiastic welcome by the citizens, miners, and all classes of the community.[7]

Reference to citizens and miners in the quotation above may well be an indication that in some ways Dawson itself was sharply separated from the surrounding mining communities along the creeks. That there were as many people living in the surrounding area as in Dawson itself is indicated by Table 4 which is abstracted from the 1911 dominion statistics.

TABLE 4

Population of Dawson & District

	Men	Women	Total
Bear Creek	20	6	26
Bonanza Creek	666	49	715
Dawson	2303	710	3013
Dominion Creek	41	13	54
Grand Forks	52	10	62
Hunker Creek	139	17	156

By the spring of 1899 nearly all the claims in the area had been staked although not, apparently, without some dissension and scandal in the course of which Thomas Fawcett, the gold commissioner, was removed from office. The claims on Bonanza Creek, the first to be discovered, also remained the richest. Creek claim No. 16, Eldorado, containing an area of four acres, produced gold worth $1,500,000 while No. 17, Eldorado, with 6.4 acres, yielded $1,300,000.

The earliest prospectors were concerned with placer or "free" gold which had been washed from its original veins and mingled with sand and gravel. It was there for any seeker who took his pan and painstakingly washed batch after batch of gravel. By the beginning of the twentieth century it was being reported that placer mining was nearing its end and that large companies were moving in "for the purpose of operating on a large scale by dredges and the hydraulic process."[8]

THE CHURCHES AND THEIR WORK

The development of churches, hospitals and schools usually go hand in hand in pioneer areas and the Yukon was no exception. Before the end of the century the clergy and ministers of several

[7] *The Yukon Territory: Its History & Resources,* Ottawa: Government Printing Bureau, 1907, pp. 18-19.

[8] *Op. Cit.,* p. 14.

denominations were at work in Dawson. Table 5, based on the dominion census figures show the distribution of religious affiliations for Yukon as a whole.

TABLE 5

Religious Affiliations

	1901	1911
Adventist	9	5
Anglican	2632	2199
Baptist	583	171
Brethren	13	—
Christian	—	36
Congregationalist	196	28
Disciples	37	2
Friends	19	4
Greek	35	169
Jews	163	38
Lutheran	2079	795
Mennonite	12	—
Methodist	1864	405
Presbyterian	3130	1603
Roman Catholic	4453	1849
Salvation Army	26	17

To a limited extent these figures reflect the racial origins of the immigrants. For example, there were, in 1901, 412 Germans and 672 Scandinavians most of whom might be presumed to be Lutheran. It is also probable that many of the 1152 Indians were Anglican by profession which would help to explain why the number of Anglicans did not decline so rapidly as did the other large denominations.

The earliest Anglican mission work on the Klondike creeks had been undertaken by Frederick Flewelling Fairweather, an American who had attended Wycliffe College, Toronto, where he had been recruited for service in the Yukon. As Dawson grew in population, Flewelling acquired a shack there and a grant of land. There was, however, some misunderstanding about the land and when Bowen arrived he had the shack moved to the present church property near the river. A small log building, 32′ x 20′, for use as a church, was erected shortly afterwards. It was replaced in 1902 by the present church building.

For a time the building also served as a school. J. McLeod had come from Winnipeg as a mission carpenter and school teacher. He was paid $15 a day and the pupils were charged 50¢ a day.

The provision of an adequate instrument for the music of

the church provided something of a problem and for the first few weeks Bowen used a concertina. He hung it about his neck and with it accompanied the hymns. The instrument itself was concealed by the prayer desk and Bowen later reported that on one occasion a somewhat inebriated miner came to the church and, after gazing about him in bewinderment for some time, called out in a hoarse voice, "Where in hell is the music?"

Shortly after this it was decided to rent an organ from one of the saloons. Five dollars a day was charged and the organ was brought over each time there was a service. It appeared that the organ was the joint property of three people. Bowen was given one of the one-third shares as a wedding fee and shortly afterwards acquired another. He then had the organ moved permanently to the church. The remaining third, however, was owned by a lady of easy virtue who insisted upon having the organ moved to her own quarters. On getting it to the door she is said to have decided that she could not commit the sacrilege of taking it from God's house to her own dwelling of ill fame whereupon the organ was returned to remain permanently in the church.

Another of the missionaries recruited for northern service on Bompas' behalf was Henry Alford Naylor.[9] Naylor and his bride left Montreal in the middle of May, 1896, bound for San Francisco. Leaving there on June 6th, they sailed north on the steamship *Bertha*. On the way they spent a few hours at Portland, Oregon, where Flewelling joined them. They arrived at St. Michael a month later with great relief, for the voyage had been rough, but also with considerable apprehension. The scenery was not altogether inviting. It rained every day. The mosquitos were thick. Also, they were beginning to hear some rather alarming stories of the eccentricities of the bishop under whom they were to work.

At St. Michael they transferred themselves and their belonging to the steamer, *Arctic,* for the journey up the Yukon river. This part of the trip was generally very pleasant and took sixteen days, at the end of which they reached Fortymile where the bishop was living.

On arrival the Naylors discovered that Bompas had decided that they were to remain there for the winter. There was already a priest living there in the person of Benjamin Totty[10] whose

[9]Henry Alford Naylor, McGill University & Montreal Diocesan Theological College. Deacon, 1896 (Montreal); Priest, 1897, Selkirk. Served in Yukon, 1896-1901 when he returned to the diocese of Montreal.

[10]Benjamin Totty was born in Wolverhampton, England; entered the Church Missionary Preparatory Institution in 1889 at the age of 25. He was ordained

responsibility was for the Indians. Naylor's work would be "to teach two half-breed boys whom the Bishop leaves with us, to visit and hold services in the village and to itinerate among the different mining camps from thirty to sixty miles distant.[11] At first they lived in a rented house with only two rooms, one of which was used for services but within a few weeks they were installed in a more convenient house which was under construction when they arrived.

Naylor soon got to work visiting the miners on the creeks but found the work far from encouraging. ". . . they are a handful of wickedness with a few redeeming characteristics among them. Even the decent ones care nothing for religion" he wrote to his parents.[12] Occasionally a man would single him out as a clergyman and express his desire for the ministrations of the church.

Flewelling stayed with the Naylors until their house was finished and was then sent by the bishop to work among the miners on the Klondike creeks. As the miners moved towards Dawson and the Klondike Naylor found himself with little to do and went as often as he could to see Flewelling.

Naylor was ordained to the priesthood by Bompas on March 27th, 1897, and given to understand that he would be serving at Dawson. Accordingly, he went to meet some of the people there and to make arrangements about accommodation. He returned to Fortymile only to discover that the Bishop had decided to send Bowen to Dawson and Naylor was to remain at Fortymile. A month or so later the bishop thought that Naylor should go to Selkirk for the winter and a little later decided to send him to Stewart. But each time he changed his mind and Naylor spent the winter at Fortymile where there were, as he said, "three able bodied clergymen in this forsaken place," the bishop, Totty and himself. Meanwhile two Presbyterian ministers had moved into Dawson and thrown the Anglican mission into eclipse.

When Bowen returned to England for reasons of health, Naylor was appointed as priest-in-charge at Dawson. His letters to his parents during the year 1900-1901 make it possible to see some-

deacon by Bompas in 1892, and priest in the following year. He was appointed to Moosehide in 1898 and remained there until his retirement in 1926. Bishop Stringer made him a canon in 1924. He died in 1945. See also L. B. Berton, *I Married the Klondike*, Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1954, p. 61.

[11] Rev. H. A. Naylor to his parents, August 18th, 1896. I am indebted to the Venerable R. K. Naylor, Montreal, for copies of Naylor's letters to his parents and friends, 1895-1901.

[12] September 11th, 1896.

thing of church life during that period. It is immediately apparent that it developed very much as in other urban centres and perhaps its greatest weakness was that it consciously copied styles and manners which were thought to be appropriate in the older and more established communities from which both clergy and parishioners had come.

For example, in 1901, Naylor wrote to a friend:

> Our Easter service was very pleasant and we had a crowded church at both services. Our service was fully choral, psalms and all. In the evening we had one of Stainer's anthems, "Why seek ye the living among the dead?" and an offertory solo, "I know that my Redeemer liveth . . ."[13]

In other letters he emphasizes the conventional nature of much of his work albeit with significant differences. To another friend he wrote:

> The work in Dawson is different to Forty Mile. Visiting, holding services, Woman's Guild, Brotherhood of St. Andrew, etc., something very like a home parish. I go up the creeks very little and then only for a day. I went twice in the winter on a bicycle. It rides easily on the well travelled trails and a great many are used. A great many of our church people live up the creeks and I only see them when they are in town on business or stay over on Sunday and come to church. . . .[14]

Elsewhere, Naylor commented that in the summer of 1899 the congregation at each service numbered between thirty and fifty but that he had been assured that numbers would increase in the winter. Early in 1900 he remarked that there were about 100 names on the parish list, none of whom were wealthy. At the same time the dominion census figures (1901) showed an Anglican population of 450 in Dawson itself, about 300 of whom would probably be men.

Roman Catholic missions in the Klondike were begun by William H. Judge, S.J., who came to Alaska in 1890. Year by year he moved up the river until in 1896 he was establishing a Jesuit mission at Fortymile where, as he said, he had "two log cabins under one roof, one for our Lord and the other for his poor servant."[15]

[13]Letter to a relative, Ken, April 9th, 1901.

[14]Letter to Miss Butler, May 4th, 1900.

[15]Charles H. Judge, *An American Missionary, Rev. William H. Judge, S.J.*, Maryknoll, N.Y.: Catholic Foreign Missionary Society of America, 1907, p. 161.

At the end of May, 1897, just as the gold rush was beginning, he moved to Dawson. The first need, he decided, was for a hospital. A board of health had already been set up under the chairmanship of Superintendent S. B. Steele, officer commanding the N.W.M.P. in the Yukon, to combat the threat of epidemic but more positive measures were required.

Living for the first summer in a tent, Judge began on the erection of a log building which was to be St. Mary's hospital. With hundreds of Roman Catholics among the miners, sick men of all races and religions to be cared for, workmen to direct and materials to procure, he had little time for anything else including meals.

He had expected that some of the Sisters of St. Ann would be coming to staff the hospital and was greatly disappointed when they failed to arrive at the end of August. So great was the need that he felt compelled to open the hospital without them, making himself responsible for the care of approximately twenty patients per day. When he found that the arrival of the sisters would be further delayed he arranged for the employment of nurses and cooks but the responsibility for the administration of the institution remained on his shoulders.

During the winter of 1897-1898 the hospital was crowded beyond its capacity with the sick and the frozen. None of the hundreds who sought admission were turned away but the effort on the priest's health, together with a shortage of adequate food, undoubtedly hastened his early death.

As a local newspaper reported,

> . . . the hospital under the wise and generous care of Father Judd [sic] has drawn no line of color, sect, creed or financial condition, against those who have applied for admission to its benefits. The poor man, in physical distress, has found in this institution excellent medical skill and the care of trained nurses without cost. The rich have had the same comforts and ministrations, but have been charged a reasonable fee for board, lodging and medical attendance. during the past winter one half or more of the patients were financially unable to pay for their care. At the present time there are over sixty patients, many of whom are unable to contribute to the defrayment of the expenses of which they are the cause.[16]

Financial worries were added to the priest's burdens and by the summer of 1898 the hospital was $25,000 in debt. Five thousand

[16] *Yukon Midnight Sun*, July 11th, 1898.

dollars was forthcoming, however, from the territorial government "appropriated from funds accruing from the rental of the water front" and the rest was collected by public subscription.

A church seating about two hundred people was built next to the hospital. It was almost completed but for the first winter had muslin instead of glass for windows. Early on the morning of Trinity Sunday, 1898, the church which had cost so much thought and labour was burned to the ground, the fire having been started by a candle which Judge left burning as he hurried away in response to a sick call from the hospital. Wearily but willingly the people began to build afresh and such was the esteem of the community for the Jesuit missionary that the new building was completed within three months.

In July, 1898, the long-expected Sisters of St. Ann arrived thus relieving Judge to a degree although the population of Dawson had now risen to its maximum. Soon afterwards an epidemic of typhoid broke out. This was not surprising considering the location and condition of the settlement. Every day new patients were brought to the hospital and soon the limited space was completely filled. An extension, three stories high, was rushed to completion but even before it was finished it was filled and more patients were waiting.

The tremendous strain finally proved to be too much for the strength of the overburdened missionary. In May, 1898, five more missionaries were appointed to help Judge, all but one of them members of the Oblate order. The intention was that they should take over the parochial work leaving Judge free to serve as chaplain of the hospital but it was too late. The strain had taken its toll. Early in January he was stricken with pneumonia and died within a week, aged forty-nine.

By the summer of 1898 the Salvation Army had also established itself in Dawson. The circumstances were recorded in the *Yukon Midnight Sun*, July 11th, 1898:

> The members of the Salvation Army contingent have commenced the erection of a barracks opposite the Episcopal church. They arrived in two boats down the river June 24th and have been holding daily services on the streets. In connection with the barracks a hospital ward will be established for the benefit of the poor and needy. The personnel is as follows: Adjutant Geo. H. Dowell, Ensigns T. J. McGill, F. Morris and Miss Rebecca Ellery, Captains Fred Bloss and M. Le Cocq and Lieut. T. M. Akin. They have been soliciting contributions for expenses from the public.

For some years they carried on social welfare work, including a shelter, a free labour bureau and a wood yard. At no time, however, do there appear to have been more than nine people who claimed the Salvation Army as their religions affiliation.

St. Mary's Hospital had been completed and enlarged by 1899 but there were those who felt that the town was still inadequately served in the matter of hospitals. On January 31st, 1898, a meeting of citizens was held to consider the establishment of a second hospital. Present at this meeting were Inspector Charles Constantine, N.W.M.P., Bishop Bompas, the Rev. S. Hall Young (Methodist), H. Le Roller, H. Grotshier, J. Nelson, Dr. Richardson, and Thomas Fawcett, the gold commissioner.

The new institution was to be called the Good Samaritan Hospital and a financial appeal was launched forthwith. A canvass was conducted throughout the Klondike and by July 6th the sum of $4892.50 had been raised, with a further $4259.60 in hand by the end of September.

The work of construction was begun on July 30th and by August 25th the first patient had been discharged. The hospital continued in operation until 1918 after which the building was purchased by St. Paul's Church. It was later transferred to the Diocese of Yukon by whom it was operated for some years as a hostal for half-breed children since the federal government refused to admit them to its residential schools.[17]

James Turner, a Methodist missionary, arrived in 1898 and helped to establish a congregation in Dawson. Little information is available concerning its activities but by 1916 the Methodist church had been closed.

Andrew S. Grant, the first Presbyterian minister to reach Dawson, had the advantage of being both a minister of religion and a physician. He had originally hoped to serve in China but by the time his training was completed there was no opening for him. Instead, he went as minister to Almonte, Ontario, there to endure the restrictions of the dead hand of tradition to an extent known only to rural Ontario. Eight years were enough and he withdrew to Ottawa to await developments. They were not long in coming and in 1897 he received an invitation from James Robertson, superintendent of missions, to work with those who had gone north in the gold rush.

Early in the following year he reached Skagway and prepared

[17]F. A. Peake, *The Bishop Who Ate His Boots, A Biography of Isaac O. Stringer*, Toronto: Anglican Church of Canada, 1966, p. 109.

to make his way over the mountains, the only missionary of any church, it is said, "who dared the dangers of the winter trail by the White Horse Pass."[18] His biographer continues:

> Here Grant won his spurs. He saved many wayfarers on the trail from pneumonia. One emergency found him operating single-handed in a tent, with the thermometer away down below zero, and only a friend to keep the water pans boiling. . . . Colonel Sam Steele (afterwards General) Inspector of the Mounted Police, reported. "Dr. Grant, a clergyman, as well as a physician, treated hundreds of sick without remuneration. Our Force owes him a heavy debt of gratitude for the way he saved our men. More than half of those at the summit and Lake Bennett had pneumonia but were so skilfully treated that we lost none. I have never seen men in such a dangerous state, and it seemed impossible that they should recover, yet they were pulled through."[19]

Once in Dawson, Grant set about organizing his congregation. A site was secured but the erection of a church would take time and money. At first, therefore, services were held in a hall belonging to the Yukon Order of Pioneers. All went well for a few weeks but then the congregation arrived to find the hall, which stood on low-lying land near the river, under water. After surveying the situation, Grant suggested that they should attend the Anglican service which was just beginning at St. Paul's. From that time those present told the story of the Presbyterians entering just as the Anglicans were singing:

> See the mighty host advancing
> Satan leading on.[20]

Other Presbyterian ministers were John Pringle, who went to Atlin; R. M. Dickey, a young Irishman who arrived in the summer of 1898 and went to Bonanza; and George Pringle who became an itinerant missionary along the creeks of the Klondike.

THE CHURCHES AND THEIR IMPACT

It is always difficult to assess the impact of the Church and particularly so in a frontier community such as Dawson. If the churches are regarded as part of the furniture of established society and measured by the size of their congregations, the adequacy of

[18]John McNab, *They Went Forth*, Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1933, pp. 138-139.

[19]*Ibid.*

[20]*Op. cit.*, p. 211.

their buildings and the permanence of their organizations, then their impact in Dawson was minimal. The flurry of activity quickly disappeared and after a couple of decades or so the Anglican and Roman churches were left to continue what seemed to be a losing struggle. Of the Roman Catholic cause it was written

> that with the decline of Dawson which began around 1910, the big church in the north end of town began to be used less and less. Between 1911 and 1922 it was used only in the summer months, or for special occasions like Christmas. The present school and church building which had been erected in 1904 being more centrally located was more convenient, and so, its chapel, on the second floor above the school, became for the winter months the parish church. Finally the break with the old church came in May of 1923 when Father Rivet assisted by Mr. Tramblay undertook to demolish it.[21]

There were a number of reasons for any lack of success in the ministry to the gold-seekers, some of them inherent in place and circumstances, others due to misunderstanding on the part of the living agents.

The nature of pioneer society is itself different from that in established communities. Many of its members were there not only to search for gold but also to get away from what they regarded as the confining restrictions of convention and respectability and among these they included the churches. Many, if not most, of the prospectors had little to do with organized religion in their original environments and intended to have even less to do with it in their new surroundings. This is a point which some missionaries, and not always just the inexperienced among them, rarely seem to have understood.

To a large extent the early missionaries had no clearly thought out philosophy or strategy of mission. They saw only the need to duplicate the well-known structures with which they had grown up. Perhaps they spent too much time in building up congregations and organizations when what was really needed was something much more subtle.

The great weakness of the large denominations when they appeared on the frontiers, and particularly the Anglican and Protestant churches was that they regarded themselves, no matter what claims might be made to the contrary, as chaplains to the faithful. Little or no attempt was made to appeal to the unchurched. The

[21]Edmond Turenne, O.M.I., *A Monument to a Man of God*, mimeoraphed pamphlet, March 7th, 1962.

reference here, of course, is to work among immigrants. Missionary work among the aborigines presented an entirely different set of problems.

It is true that in the fall of 1900 an ex-policeman, Christopher Reed, was appointed to undertake Anglican mission work (significantly not *missionary* work) on the creeks. The chances are, however, that he was so imbued with the institutional character of Christianity that he thought chiefly in terms of liturgical services. At the same time Naylor was writing:

> We are agitating for a new church here. A proper building can be put up for eleven thousand dollars and I have been urging the people to give it straight out of their pockets but they seem to think it is a big sum.[22]

Part of the difficulty lay in the transitoriness of so many clergy and ministers. Within a very few months Bowen, Flewelling, Naylor and Warren served in succession at Dawson. As Mrs. Berton remarked

> The Protestant ministers in Dawson . . . came and went like flocks of migrating geese in the fall. (The Roman Catholic priests, on the other hand, hung on for decades.)[23]

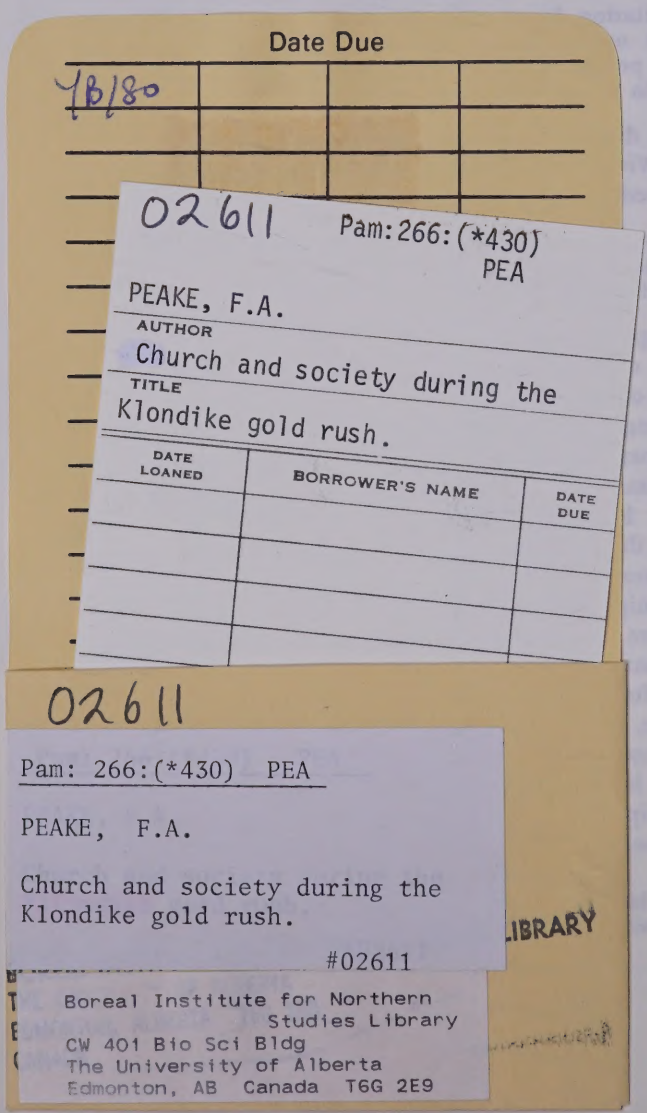
But the responsibility for this tendency to regard the church as a chaplaincy cannot be laid entirely at the door of the clergy. Granted, many of them were young and inexperienced. Some of them were lacking in evangelistic imagination. On the other hand, many of their parishioners were lacking in anything more than a perfunctory commitment. To be a churchman, for many of them, meant more or less regular attendance at services, a minimum contribution to the maintenance of church fabric and the living agent, and a reasonably and relatively moral way of life.

Churchmanship was not seen as involving any personal commitment to share the Christian Gospel with others. If such a thing was necessary it was seen as the exclusive responsibility of the priest who, after all, was the professional religionist, the vicarious Christian. Hence, in Dawson, as elsewhere, the impact of the Church on the non-believing majority was slight.

It remains, however, that even if the missionaries did not achieve the anticipated and conventional ends, Dawson would have been infinitely poorer had they not been there.

[22]H. A. Naylor to his parents, Nov. 13th, 1900.

[23]L. B. Berton, *I married the Klondike,* Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1954, p. 17.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